

Shine

Churches Together in Bishop's Stortford Community Festival

14th-28th September 2008

At the recent meeting of the CTBS Forum, we committed ourselves to sponsoring a community festival in the town during the fortnight of 14th-28th September 2008. The Festival would be entitled *Shine*. Let me explain why we have come up with this idea.

Some time ago the ministers meeting at one of their annual retreats held a discussion about the place of the Church in our community. We made the observation that whilst the Church is at the heart of the local community, we are not always perceived in that way. We know the importance of church life in our community and we believe that we are called to be salt and light in the world so we believe in having an influence on society. My assertion was that we needed to do some things that raised our profile and pointed people to what we were already doing, and we needed to do this in a form that was clearly seen to be giving something to the community.

That's the point of *Shine*. It is an opportunity to remind people of some of the things that we are involved in and a demonstration of our belief in investing in the community of Bishop's Stortford and perhaps injecting a bit of civic pride.

How are we going to do this? The events of the fortnight will revolve around two community activities in addition to which each Church will take responsibility for an event of its own. These Church activities will either showcase some aspect of the life of that Church or offer some event in keeping with your church's tradition and at which you excel. The Churches will provide leadership and some resources to the festival.

The community activities will focus on the two weekends:

- ***Make Stortford Shine***
 - A Saturday to clean up and spruce up our town. This may involve anything from litter picking to doing odd jobs for the elderly
- ***Get to Know Your Neighbours***
 - A weekend to meet up with the neighbours, organise street parties, barbecues etc

The scope of these events is only limited by our imaginations.

If you're wondering why we've chosen the title *Shine*. It's because it can have a two-fold meaning. From a church perspective Matthew 5:16 says: *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.* It will be about letting our light shine. From a community perspective it will be about letting Bishop's Stortford shine.

The next steps that we are taking are as follows:

- Identify and bring together members of an organising team
- Identify those who might be stakeholders in the festival. These would include the Town Council, police, British Waterways, Herts & Essex Observer etc. In particular we need to identify individuals within these organisations that might make a significant contribution to the festival.
- Establish a timetable and budget to achieve the festival's aims
- Individual Churches decide on an event that they might run

Autumn 2008 looks a long way away at the moment but it will take a lot of organising if we are to get this right. I believe that we can come up with some really creative ideas that could have a significant impact on the town. I hope you will want to get behind it and contribute in whatever way you can.

Rev John Walford
Senior Minister Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church
Vice Chair CTBS